THE INNER COMMUNITY TIMES

The Church Behind the Wall

Fall 2003
Vacaville, California

Over 85 inmates commit their lives to Christ following *The Love of Jesus* Easter musical

After many weeks of practice, the Prison Ministry Choir had the opportunity to present, The Love of Jesus, *to the inmates at California State Prison-Solano. Over 85 men committed their lives to Christ for the first time and there were many recommitments. Thank God for the many seeds planted!*

More blessed than I ever imagined

Bonnie Miller

What a blessing it was to be part of the Prison Ministry Choir during Easter 2003. I had previously been quick to tell Pastor Tim I did not have the time and was committed to too many other things to go into the prison. As it was, my schedule was very hectic, and it was hard to find time to attend practice and the performances, but I ended up being more blessed by the experience than I had ever imagined.

As the inmates entered the room where we sang, they were serious and guarded, but as the Holy Spirit ministered through song, I began to witness their countenance change and a softening of their expressions. When they exited the room, they were joyful and happy and shook our hands with exuberant thanks and their expressions were real and heartfelt.

I entered the prison thinking that the men would be hard and unable to receive the message behind our songs, but the Lord showed me these men were hungry for His love, and every seed planted behind these walls would germinate and grow to fulfill His purpose.

I can understand why many believe revival will begin in the prison! These men are hungry and eager to receive the Word of God. And, I believe that God will use them greatly to revive His people. He has already used them to bless me beyond words!

Thank you, Pastor Tim, for your continuous invitations to fellowship with you in the prison.

Bonnie attends Christian Life Center; this was her first year participating in the Prison Ministry Choir.

Not what I expected

Elnora F. Smith

I want to give honor to our MOST HIGH GOD also, I would like to say thank you Pastor Tim for inviting me to be a part of the Prison Ministry Choir.

It was different from what I expected, I did not know we would be so close to the inmates.

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A PERSPECTIVE

Have you ever limited God or questioned what God can accomplish? Throughout scripture, we see where God has done great and mighty things, specifically in the New Testament; we see salvation, healing and deliverance.

Today, we see and hear of the healing of Aids, cancer, the deaf hearing, and the dead being raised; yet, we have a misunderstanding of the goodness of God in reference to individuals behind prison walls.

The reasoning behind this statement is that when men and women behind bars accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior they have great faith and hold on to His promises.

Throughout the body of Christ, there are many levels of maturity whether behind bars or within a community. Many incarcerated individuals rely on their growth, maturity and strength in Christ while in prison as they prepare for life on the outside.

While we all should be reminded that there are no acceptable levels of sin in God's eyes, humanity has set levels of sin as being acceptable or unacceptable. There is no distinction between telling a little white lie, committing a murder, stealing or breaking a traffic law; sin is sin. We cannot judge what a person does, the word of God tells us that once he or she has confessed his or her sin and accepted Jesus Christ, the sins are forgiven.

Over the last seven years there have been prophesies that relate to men and women coming out of prison to go and share the gospel. I have met several individuals who now carry this message.

Pastor Tim and Katie May

Hector Marquez is one who had a life sentence in Argentina, where he says one life is equal to one life in his country. It's a life for a life. Because of his criminal history, he knew he would never be released from prison; he received Christ in a powerful way and was doing the work of the ministry behind bars. He and four other Christian inmates went into a burning building and rescued eleven inmates. For this act of bravery, each of these men received a presidential pardon.

Hector now travels the nations of the world ministering the message of Christ in churches but primarily in prisons and county jails. There are several others, who were previously incarcerated, now ministering the gospel.

Let us remove our hesitancy and welcome these former inmates into the body of Christ. We must hold on to Romans 12:2, *"…to be transformed by the renewing of our mind that we may prove what is good and acceptable and the perfect will of God."* Let us respond in perfect love and grace to all of God's children.

Are you involved yet?

Since the beginning of time, the stigma of being an incarcerated individual has affected how society has reacted to and dealt with the lives of these men and women who have been forgotten.

Today men and women have taken up the challenge of Christ to visit those who are in prison. Some of what is happening is recorded in this booklet.

God continues to change lives, hearts and attitudes through His salvation, healing and deliverance. This change affects not only the lives of the inmates but of those who have taken the opportunity to minister God's love.

As you read this, whether you currently pastor in a prison or serve as a volunteer chaplain, be encouraged. *Your work has eternal value.* In a large sense, what you are doing truly dispels the notion that "once a criminal, always a criminal".

Have you yet to participate in prison ministry? If not, may you be challenged to become involved once you have read what others have to say about their involvement in prison ministry.

There are many ways in which to participate in prison ministry; these include using your gifts and talents to minister within the *Church Behind the Wall,* through prayer for the team, one-on-one visitation, being a mentor, letter writing, participating in a support group for wives, mothers and fiancées of inmates, and lastly, your financial support.

When you go into the prison, remember *"when you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto me"*. Just imagine that you are ministering to Jesus Christ Himself.

Tim May, Associate Pastor
Prison Ministry Director

God has been with me every day

Fred H.

I was born many years ago into a military family. At the age of four, I was adopted by another military family. We moved several times because of my dad's Navy assignments. Dad was not around much until I reached junior high school. I do not remember hearing the words I love you from my dad until I came to prison. My mom was a drinker and had her male friends.

My memory of church was in my junior-high years, singing in the choir and attending Sunday school. In high school things changed and church was a place to go so that my parents could not see the remnants of my night before.

At 18, I was in the military and out of the house. My mom and dad moved to Washington State. At the age of 22, I was married. Our son died at birth and my wife wanted to be free, so we divorced after two years. I still had big holes in my life.

In 1969, I married again and she had everything I thought I needed. We did go to church and the kids sang in the choir. However, still there was something missing. Then the day came when I got into trouble and all hell broke loose. My wife said, "I'll stand by you, no matter what".

While I was in my bed one night, I cried out to God, I drifted off to sleep crying. When I woke, my wife was in the kitchen; I came in full of joy and walking on air. She asked me what was up, I said, "It's all okay, everything is going to be fine, it's over." Her words were, "I don't think so, and you still have the courts." At that point, the bubble popped, I sank into a hole. On Sunday I was at church, I walked with the Lord, talked with and prayed with Him too.

One day sitting in my lawyer's office, he said, "What do you think?" I told him God had everything under control, He was my Rock. My lawyer said *he* was my rock and would do his best. Well, that was six years ago. God has been with me each and every day since then.

There was a time I lost it and felt alone. The day I went to the hospital and they brought me papers to sign, my last will and testament and next of kin. It was my birthday, my wife was coming to see me and I lost it. When she came into the visiting room at California Medical Facility-Vacaville, I told her everything about my day to that point. She told me then to keep strong, as God had plans for us. A few days later I was talking to the surgeon, his words to me were, "This is in God's hands, He has full control and everything will be all right". Three weeks later, I was back to my yard at California State Prison-Solano. Sixty days later, I was back to full duty. God is good!

Over my time here at California State Prison-Solano, I tried to be at all the Christian services. I remember one night Pastor Tim was speaking, he really hit home and by the end of the service I was standing in a puddle of tears. The love showed by the people who come into the prison is overwhelming. They bring us the Word, song and ears to hear our pain. They help us through our days with the care and the love that they share.

I have been blessed with the opportunity of visiting with a prison ministry group from The Father's House. We spend time talking about our families, our week and what we may be going through. They share the Word, prayer and their time to help us remember that God loves us. With the help of the body of each group, I have a peace that I have never known. Thank you all, Praise God!

Fred is an inmate and Chaplain's Assistant at California State Prison-Solano.

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Love as I love

Constance Vanides

I've given you a company of friends,
those on whom you may call,
and they in turn may call on you.
This is My gift to you.
In receiving it, let it be
as I have meant it to be.
You do not face Me in the flesh.
But these are as if I am
in your presence face to face.
See beyond their externals,
See them as I see their inner hearts.
Greet them as I greet them,
with loving kindness, patience and gentleness.
For I have made each one
and have brought them to you
to show others who I am. ALL LOVE.
Can you do that also?
I am counting on you
to do just that in order for others
to come into My kingdom.
They will know who I am
by the love you show to one another.

www.Godcares.org

This is what church is meant to be

Tonya Stanton

I have been wanting to visit the prison with the ministry team for some time now, but it just never happened. I felt the Lord was leading me in that direction. At the

mention of prison ministry, I felt a pull at my heart.

However, I would tell myself, "I am not a teacher and I do not sing well enough to sing a solo. They would not need me; I would just be in the way."

My church is planning a trip to Romania and I knew I had to go. At the planning meeting, they told us the purpose of the trip is to train worship leaders. Well, I thought, I do not sing.

Then they talked about going into the prisons. The Lord began to speak to my heart and as each day passes, I am sure this is what I am supposed to do. God has put great love in my heart for people and I can share that! My imagination tells me it will be the low point in my life, geographically speaking, but I cannot wait to get there. I know it will be a high point spiritually. How do I know this? I know God honors obedience.

Pastor Tim May requested everyone planning on going into the Romanian prisons and has not been involved with prison ministry should sign up to go to California State Prison-Solano with him and the Prison Ministry Team a few times before going to Romania.

Well, obedience is better than sacrifice, so I filled out the paperwork required to go into the prison. It was painless really. After being approved and receiving a date and time, I announced to my family that I was going to jail and off I went, just like someone that knew what they were doing.

I was not nervous at all about being there, but I carried with me my preconceived ideas about what it was going to be like being in the same room with all these prisoners. I was asked to greet the men as they entered the Chapel. I have done that before I thought, and I am good at that. I shook every hand and smiled at every face, all 130 of them! They were so happy to be there.

As the music began to play and the men began to worship, everything changed, in my heart and mind anyway. I was not in a building full of prisoners. I was in a church with my brothers in Christ, my family of God. These men were not here just to get out of their cell, they love the Lord! This is what church is meant to be.

A group of men (all colors) got up to sing a special song. Some sang like angels, some off key. It was the prettiest song I had heard in a long time. The chapel was full. This is not what I expected.

Pastor Tim shared practical information and then encouraged the men with God's Word. I shook the men's hands and spoke blessings over them as they left. To my astonishment, they thanked me for being there. Many of the men expressed surprise that I would want to come there to be at the service. I could not believe my ears. I was the one who was honored by their presence.

The Lord, it was all about Him and I could not imagine anywhere I would rather be.

I have been to the prison twice now. If the Lord wants me there every Tuesday night, that is where I am going to be.

I believe every single Christian should go in and worship with these brothers at least a few times a year. You will be surprised at how your perspective will change. It cannot be easy serving Christ in prison and winning souls. Yet, their church continues to grow. They need us praying and they need to know we care.

I encourage you. See Pastor Tim or your pastor about prison ministry. If you want more of God, if you want to know Him better, go spend time with the "least" of them. Remember, God honors obedience.

Tonya attends Christian Life Center.

Witness to God's love

Tonya Morant

Being a member of the Prison Ministry Choir has been a blessing to me. I have witnessed the greatness of God's expression of healing, forgiveness and love.

To me, love is like wearing the perfect suit, which has been made just for us. Our suit, according to *Ephesians 6:11*, is that all who are in Christ have put on the whole armor of God, which is the suit we now wear as believers. When I enter the prison I see man through the eyes of Jesus, and we are all tailor-made by Him.

Tonya attends Christian Life Center and has participated in the Prison Ministry dramas and musicals for the last three years.

“You have always come, you have always been there”

Richard K.

About eleven years ago, I came to this yard from Facility 1; having gone to the chapel on a few occasions, I inquired about the services at this facility and was informed that a group of people came in from Vaca Valley Christian Life Center. Not knowing what to expect because these people were, you know, Pentecostal, and my experience with them as a young boy was similar to that in the movie Elmer Gantry. I was somewhat reluctant to go, but the Lord led me to go, so I went and continue to this very day.

I remember when you, Pastor Tim, first came and the visions you shared, as well as some of your personal thoughts and watched as others came, Kenny Lloyd and his group, Sister Wanda, Pastor Dave and my dear Brother Randy, whom I dearly miss, but you have always come, you have always been there!

You came even after they closed us down for one year, one of Satan’s small victories, yet we prevailed and once again, you have come back!

Over the past eleven years, you have mentioned time and time again, how you wanted to see ten thousand men receive the Lord from both these prisons. Little do you realize that probably over ten thousand men have heard the Word from you over these past eleven years, some came from California Medical Facility-Vacaville and some went to the California Medical Facility-Vacaville from here, so you have accomplished your dream, I’ve seen and witnessed it.

Doing a life sentence can be challenging because I have seen so many brothers come and go and return and go again, yet you and I remain. We have shared the Word, had communion, sang songs, cried together and laughed together! At one time I shared my testimony and three men jumped up to be saved. You told me to finish what I started, but I said you are the Pastor not me. I will never forget your response, “Finish the job, for a Pastor may not always be around, now it’s upon you, so finish the job”.

Your church has no idea of the work that you do and the accomplishments that have been made. Praise the Lord for what your church has done, by endorsing Prison Ministry this has given broken men, drug addicts, vagrants, misguided, maladjusted, murderers (myself included), rejects from society; I guess you might call us present day Lepers, you have brought us the truth!

I guess you might call us present day Lepers, you have brought us the truth!

You have shown us who and what God meant us to be, you taught us that Christ forgave us so why can’t we forgive each other and ourselves. While we broke ourselves down Christ built us back up, made us believe that we are the image of the all mighty Living God.

You have met some of the men who have been released and now are hard working, Christ centered and heads of their own homes. They are where they are because by God’s grace you led them, fed them, helped clean them up and sent them away strong, grounded and steadfast in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Had I not gone to that service eleven years ago, I truly can say I don’t know what kind of a man I would be now, or even if I would be here now. After twenty-nine years of imprisonment, I look in the Bible to men who endured much more than I did, and they have given me much strength. Knowing what I am now, and whom I belong to, Jesus Christ. I stand tall as a Christian, bold in the Word and stand toe to toe with the toughest and still prevail. I have overcome so much, yet have so much more to learn, but having you as a teacher, brother and sometimes father, helps me immensely. To my brother in Christ, I pray these lines encourage you as you have encouraged me. I thank your church for sending you and your ministry team and I thank you for your constant devotion to Prison Ministry. By the way, my wife, whom I told you of, said whenever I was released she would love to meet the man who affected my life so much. Praise the Lord.

Richard is an inmate at California State Prison-Solano.

Meet the Prison Ministry Team

Team Members

Cathy Blank

Marlee Certini

Mike Davis

Jerry Dayce

Dan Dunn

Beth Failor

John Haaf

Bill Holland

Tim May

Katie May

Patricia Phillips

Paula Polfliet

Jolene Queen

Fermin Rubio

Daryl Stewart

Kim Taylor

Jim Walton

John Williams

Paula and Dennis Polfliet

Born in Barbados, Paula grew up on Long Island, New York where she learned to love and trust in God. Her parents were both ministers of the Word and taught her at an early age the importance of having a personal relationship with God. More importantly, they taught her the significance of worship.

Although her parents separated and left the ministry, her mother was an incredible example of what life with God was like. Through her, she saw the goodness and faithfulness of God and the power of prayer.

At an early age, Paula desired to go into the ministry. She wanted her life to make a difference for the kingdom. Being an affiliate of the Prison Ministry Team has helped Paula fulfill a part of that calling.

Paula has been a member of Prison Ministry for three years. She has seen the power of God turn hard stone into moldable clay. Through this ministry, Paula has grown not only as a speaker, but also as a singer and songwriter. She has been able to use her talents to touch the hearts of the inmates; her songs have brought hope, joy and light.

Paula and her husband Dennis have been married for 12 years and have three wonderful children: Jessica 10, Jeremy 8, and Joseph 2.

Paula served ten years of active duty in the Air Force. She is now a full time mom, and loving it!

Dennis also serves in the Air Force as an Examiner/Engineer on the C-5 cargo planes. Paula and her family have been stationed at Travis Air Force Base for ten years, and have been at Christian Life Center almost as long.

Dennis has been a tremendous part of the Prison Ministry Team, by supporting and encouraging Paula to continue to sing and share the love of Jesus with the inmates.

"It is so important to have the love and support of your family, especially in this ministry. Knowing that they are praying for you and cheering you on is what keeps you going."

It is not just Paula's ministry; it is her family's ministry.

John and Donna Haaf

John grew up in an Air Force family and lived in various parts of the United States and the world. His interaction with different people and cultures continued during his own 22-year Air Force career as a flight instructor, transport pilot and safety officer. John is currently conducting adult management and safety training for water districts throughout California as a Risk Management Consultant with the Association of California Water Agencies Joint Powers Insurance Authority (ACWA/JPIA).

John and his wife of 29 years, Donna, have lived in Vacaville, California since 1988. They have two grown sons, Jay and David. John and Donna have attended Vaca Valley Christian Life Center (CLC) since 1999, they are both active in several CLC ministries.

John's relationship with the Lord began at an early age, but became a priority in the late '80's when he became fully committed to the leadership of Jesus Christ in his life. Since that time, the Holy Spirit has moved John into evangelism, Bible teaching and a desire for an ever-increasing relationship with our Lord Jesus.

Highlights of John's recent spiritual journey include a healing and evangelism mission to Brazil in 2001 with Global Awakening, and a three-year relationship with the Prison Ministry Team. Believing that a handshake and smile can convey the love of Jesus and that prayers of faith can win spiritual battles, John has seen the Holy Spirit change lives, both physically and emotionally.

Prison Ministry has given John the opportunity to meet and work with men who, although imprisoned, have a tremendous spiritual freedom and are true warriors for our Lord Jesus. They face unmasked evil each day with nothing but their faith in Jesus Christ to protect and guide them. John's desire is that everyone be aware of, and prepared for, the spiritual battle he or she will encounter. He has a special desire that the Christian brothers in prison are thoroughly prepared for this battle and feels he is blessed to be able to participate in God's ministry to the world.

Fermin and Susan Rubio

Fermin and Susan Rubio were high school sweethearts in Dixon, California where they grew up. Fermin has been serving the Lord for the past 20 years. Fermin, Susan and their two daughters, Erika and Corrine, attend Grace Fellowship in Dixon.

The Lord has used Fermin's talents as a drummer and singer by giving him the opportunity to be a part of the church's celebration team. Fermin also teaches a weekly adult Sunday school class.

Fermin became a Correctional Officer for the California Department of Corrections at the California Medical Facility (CMF) in Vacaville, in 1987. He soon became a member of the CMF Investigative Services Unit (ISU), which monitors all of the prison's criminal activities, including gangs, narcotic trafficking and assaults. During his five years on the ISU, Fermin became well versed on the inner workings of the prison society just under the surface, a society not often seen by the regular prison staff.

On many occasions, the Lord used Fermin to reach out to hardcore gangsters with the gospel, those individuals locked up deep within the prison's administrative segregation units. On many occasions, Fermin witnessed the Lord "breakdown" the hardest of hearts. Fermin eventually was promoted to sergeant, and then in 2001, he transferred to the Department of Motor Vehicles as a Criminal Investigator.

Fermin knows the Lord placed him into the California Department of Corrections (CDC) in order to provide him with the experience, knowledge and trials he would need to grow, to be effective in prison ministry.

Fermin has a deep compassion for the Christian brothers incarcerated within the prison walls. He knows it is a great privilege to be used by God as a witness, to make himself available to the inmates as someone who understands the life "inside" and he truly loves them as "brothers in Christ."

Fermin loves to encourage and share with the inmates what God has done in his own life and what he has seen God do to hearts inside the prison.

He bases God's calling on his life from Isaiah 42: 6, 7: *"I the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will keep you and will make you a covenant for the people and a light for the gentiles, to open the eyes that are blind, to free the captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those that sit in darkness."*

Participating Churches

Christian Life Center, Vacaville

Grace Fellowship, Dixon

New Hope Christian Fellowship, Vacaville

Parkway Church, Fairfield

Trinity Baptist, Vacaville

Woodland Assembly of God, Woodland

Hispanic Outreach

Chaplain Ricardo Villarreal

I want to take this opportunity to thank Pastor Tim for inviting me to be a part of his Prison Ministry Team.

Ricardo and Aixa Villarreal

The people we met and ministered to are those I will always remember. Kim Taylor, Patricia Phillips and Beth Failor were so much fun and at the same time very serious about what we were there for. The way we worked together without rehearsing who was going to minister next or how it all was going to come out left no doubt that it was all God.

I'm also grateful for the opportunity given me to minister to the Hispanic prison population. Just like the Saturday afternoon service we had, I also found the Hispanics were so hungry for spiritual nourishment. There were two who gave their lives to the Lord in the Hispanic service and others in the English service.

I believe God will bless and give credit not just to those of you who prayed and supported this evangelistic effort, but also to Chaplain Loren and his wife Naldy, their son Jeremiah, and all those who provided for us during our stay in Arizona. Once again, thank you Pastor Tim for inviting me and allowing me this privilege.

Chaplain Villarreal is a counselor at Valley Evangelical Free Church, Vacaville. This article references his recent opportunity traveling with the Prison Ministry Team to Safford Federal Prison in Arizona.

CHAMPIONS FOR LIFE

Day of Champions

RE: California State Prison-Solano,
Day of Champions Evangelistic Outreach

Dear Tim and Team Members,

What a tremendous reception we received at California State Prison-Solano, the Warden, Chief Deputy Warden and Community Resource Manager, as well as several officers met us as we arrived. Warden Carey's words were profound and uplifting and his warm reception was sincerely appreciated. Our coordinators quickly assigned the teammates to their respective yards and we all cleared the entrance without any delays. This was a great way to start the day.

The entire event was a great success and I thank each of you for all your efforts by witnessing and spreading the Good News to the lost throughout the heat of the day. We had 142 first time decisions for Christ and 171 rededications. Praise the Lord for how He used each team member to encourage these men to walk with and for God.

Thank you again for spending your Saturday working for the Kingdom. The rewards on earth are great, but our reward in heaven will be far greater.

Yours in Christ,
Jerry Graham, Regional Director

Reflections on Day of Champions

Katie May

This past July, Kim Taylor and I had the opportunity to participate in the evangelistic outreach with Champions For Life at California State Prison-Solano. Our assignment was to escort a group of volunteers to a specific yard then remain with them throughout the day in order to provide any assistance that might be needed. The group brought in motorcycles and a racecar, several motivational speakers who were former professional athletics, a strongman, a magician and musicians. Everyone enjoyed the entertainment and the message of hope.

After coming to this facility for many years on Tuesday evenings, this was the first time that we were able to have a lengthy conversation with the inmates without any time constraints. We were able to speak freely about the Lord, answered questions that some of the inmates had about the Bible, spoke about family issues and discussed

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the many aspects of the different religious faith groups.

Since we were the only female volunteers on the yard among 1600 men, we felt the covering and anointing of the Lord upon us. A few of the Champions For Life volunteers did express surprise that as women we regularly come into a male facility in a position of leadership and are able to effectively minister to these men.

We anticipate that Champions For Life will come to this prison next year; I definitely am going to be a part of this outreach to the inmates of California State Prison-Solano. I would encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity and become involved in this time of ministry.

Katie May

Katie attends Christian Life Center and is a member of the Prison Ministry Team.

Kairos Outside

When someone is incarcerated in prison, their imprisonment impacts spouses, children, parents, other relatives and close friends who often "do time" right along with their loved one.

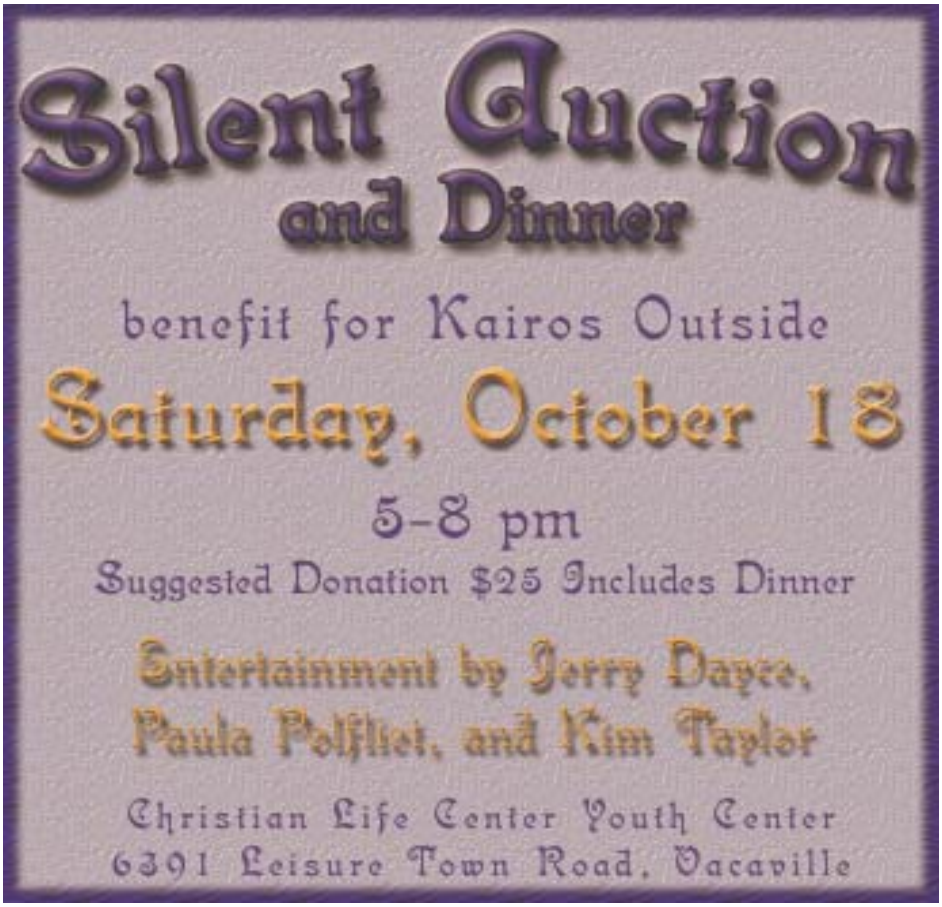
Kairos Outside is designed to support women who have loved ones who are or have been incarcerated in state and federal correctional facilities, as well as county jails and youth offender programs.

This support is first provided in a safe environment with Christian people during a Kairos Outside weekend. During this weekend, guests have an opportunity to interact in a Christian setting with other women who are in similar situations.

The weekend is interspersed with food, music, prayer, fun activities, entertainment and numerous surprises throughout the length of the retreat. Although the weekend is Christian in nature, no religious affiliation is necessary to attend and guests are not asked to join any church or become part of any religion.

Any adult female whose life has been impacted by the incarceration of a loved one is eligible to attend a Kairos Outside weekend. For further information, call Mary Trancho, (530) 759-8484; or Lois Rahn, (415) 927-1229.

Kairos Outside will be hosting a Silent Auction Benefit on Saturday, October 18 from 5 to 8 pm at Christian Life Center's Youth Center. Items to be auctioned are all products crafted by men and women who are incarcerated. Music and entertainment will be provided by Paula Polfliet, Kim Taylor and Jerry Dayce. A donation of $25 is suggested.



Pray for…

Local prisons

- God to radically change the lives of men and women to reflect the character of Christ.
- Local inmates at both California Medical Facility (CMF) and California State Prison, Solano
- Men and women in county jail
- Young people in juvenile hall
- Families of the incarcerated
- Individuals would be sensitive and respond to the call for 10,000 men and 3,000 women to mentor (pre-Christian) new-believers.

Clean and healed while in prison

Carlos M.

I grew up in a non-Christian home. At a very young age, my first memory is of my mother and father fighting physically. The S.W.A.T. team came with guns flashing but no shots fired. My father said to the S.W.A.T. team, "If I go, my son goes."

My parents divorced and I lived with my mother during the school year and with my father during summer vacation.

My mother remarried and my stepfather was verbally and mentally abusive to her. He would shoot his gun off in the house, all "coked up" and drunk. We moved to Williams, California to get away from him but he followed. Every holiday involved cops coming to the house.

My father did "coke" and was an avid drinker. My older cousins were living with him. They showed me that partying is a lifestyle.

I was soon well acquainted with all the local bars in Patterson, Newman and the Navy base in Crow's Landing. I would watch people put things up their nose; smoke joints and women give their body for drugs.

Between Kindergarten and grade 12, I moved many times. I attended eight or ten different schools.

I started smoking around the third grade. I also licked cocaine dust off mirrors and knew how to smoke pot and roll joints. I knew the difference between the good stuff and the bad stuff.

When I was 13, I would go to school after drinking four or five wine coolers stolen from my mother's stash. I got in trouble with the law: theft and assault.

I pretty much made up my own rules. Nobody was at home. My mother worked 16-hour days, six days a week. I did the cleaning, cooking and paying bills while my mother worked. By age 14, I was without parental guidance. I chose whether I would go to school or not, and I came and went as I wished.

When I was 15, I was brought home by the police for assault and battery. I was using meth, LSD, alcohol, and I.V. drugs. I was losing my mind. I had paranoid episodes where I heard and saw things that were not there. I spent time in graveyards talking to demons.

I caught another assault and battery charge and did a month in Juvenile Hall when I was 17. I told God I would change if he let me out. I would go to church, whatever, just let me get out. He did, but my life-style did not change. I got worse.

At 19, I was arrested again. I wanted to cry out to God but did not know how. However, He knew how to grab me. While in jail I read the Bible, but could not make sense of it. I still had demons on me. I ended up with more prison time than I will live.

In January 1996, I had a dream where I found myself in a dungeon, all gray, black, slimy and dark, like a pit. There were four doors with directions: North, East, South and West.

From the East door came a light. I was scared and noticed I was crawling on my belly. I needed this light not to pass by me. I slithered up to the East door in hopes He would see me. The light came into my cell. A voice told me to come in. It was the most awesome light I had ever known. As I lay there before the light He said, in a language I did not know, "Be clean, Be healed." I wept deep, cleansing sobs.

I woke up from that dream crying. At that point, I was free, my thoughts were clear! I read the gospel of Luke 19:1-10 and His word opened up to me. I read how He came to seek and to save the lost. That was me!

My first year and a half as a Christian I just learned the basics. I had battles. I lost some but Christ won more.

I went to New Folsom Prison in January 1998. Somebody asked me a question about my faith and I did not have an answer, so I started studying the Bible more.

I had bitterness problems in the beginning and it affected my prison cell living. I still had selfishness to deal with.

I had one "cellie", Johnny, for two years. He was a gift from God. He had no problem speaking up and telling me like it was. Then for about six months, I had Billy as a cellmate. We spent much time in the Word and he showed me how to put together studies.

I did not have much fellowship outside my cell because of lock downs. I was able to go to church on Wednesday for an hour. There were six other people there. But, it was great.

When not on lock down, Johnny, Billy, and I would go to the day room, and sing hymns loudly and study the Bible. And, where two or more are gathered, Christ is there!

When I came to California State Prison-Solano, I did not know what to expect. But, I found a most wonderful fellowship in Christ. I wept for joy at being able to go to the chapel with all the brethren and sing praises to God.

However, when I heard people came in from the outside to worship, I did not believe it. I was very intimidated and scared. Aside from

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Clean and healed
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my mother, I do not have much conversation with free people. It is a splendid blessing to know what God is doing outside these walls. I cannot describe my gratitude to God for the blessing of the people from Christian Life Center.

Carlos is an inmate at California State Prison-Solano.

Now what I expected
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My concept was totally distorted. I actually thought we would be on a stage and there would be a glass separating the inmates and the choir. What a surprise! I was not afraid, just surprised at the atmosphere.

I was there to sing from the very depth of my soul and to minister to the inmates through songs. I started to focus on our real purpose for being there. It was to let the inmates know that we cared about them and no matter what any unlawful activity an individual has done in his or her life, God loves them.

God has a divine plan for each one of us and we are all participants whether we want to be or not. May God bless you to go to his planned level. "…*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" Romans 3:23

Elnora attends Christian Life Center; this was her first year participating in the Prison Ministry Choir.

Easter program participants

Participating churches

Christian Life Center, Vacaville

New Hope Christian Fellowship, Vacaville

North Bay Foursquare Church, Vallejo

Easter program participants continued

Parkway Church, Fairfield

The Father's House, Vacaville

Trinity Baptist, Vacaville

Production Team

Kim Taylor, Choir Director

Dan McCollum, Narrator

Robert Brigham, Sound

Katie May, Security / Escort

John Williams, Security / Escort

Choir Members

Carolina Aguardo

Janeen Barbarick

Bill Barr

Hank and Cathy Blank

Susan Brigham

Marlee Certini

Melodie Dayce

Dan Dunn

Delbert Edwards

Beth Failor

Lori Findlaytor

Nancy Gould

Jeanine Havlicek

Donna Hoover

Alicia Johnson

Alma Keirsey

Tim May

Janell Michael

Bonnie Miller

Tonya Morant

Patricia Phillips

Jolene Queen

Verna Ringler

Yvonne Russ

Ruth Sayles

Elnora (Faye) Smith

Daryl Stewart

Delores Taylor

Sherilyn Underwood

James Walton

Clarrisa Watkins

Karen Whitaker

Jan White

Easter program participants continued

Special Thanks

Special thanks to Dave Swaim of A-1 Moving and Storage, (707) 864-4230, for the use of a moving van to transport our equipment.

"Go through, go through the gates"

Isaiah 62:10

Chaplain Trey Littlejohns

From the first time that I observed Pastor Tim cooking thick pork chops, mashed potatoes and gravy for a bunch of prison evangelists, I knew I loved him. First, let me thank your pastor and the elders of your church for listening to the voice of the Lord:

"*Remember the prisoners as though in prison with them.*" Hebrews 13:3

I remember when Prison Fellowship was praying about putting Pastor Tim on the volunteer staff just to minister to the Chaplains at the County Jails, the Youth Authority and the State Prisons. I praise God for His calling upon Timothy and Katie.

I also want to take this opportunity to remind the Lord about Sister Patricia and her gift for preaching. She scares the Devil himself and blesses the men in prison through her testimony.

Your team's love offering of music, testimony, praise and the Word is GREATLY APPRECIATED by this chaplain.

Chaplain Littlejohns has held the position as Protestant Chaplain at Sierra Conservation Camp, Jamestown, California for approximately ten years.

Angel Tree Christmas

In memory of Jim

Kandi Teska

Last Christmas, I wanted to do something that involved my entire family in giving to others. I had previously participated in the Angel Tree program, so this year I decided to ask my family if they would like to help me. Pastor Tim provided the name of a child whose father was in prison and mother was undergoing chemotherapy.

Kandi Teska (right) with her sister, Bonnie, Jim's wife,

Before Christmas, we decided as a family that we would begin an annual tradition in honor of my brother-in-law, Jim, who went to be with the Lord the year before on New Year's Day. Jim disliked the commercialism of Christmas and especially delighted in giving abundantly to others in need.

My sister brought Jim's Christmas stocking to our family Christmas party, which we held the week before Christmas. Before exchanging gifts with each other, we took a few minutes to pass around Jim's stocking so that each family, including the children, could place their contribution for the Angel Tree family inside.

This especially touched my seven-year-old granddaughter who asked to spend the night with me so that she could go shopping and help deliver the gifts and groceries. Her assistance was invaluable since, as she put it, "*Kids know what other kids like.*"

I believe she was more excited about participating in giving to this child and his family than she was in receiving her Christmas gifts and even requested to do it again next year. This gave me a wonderful opportunity to talk about spiritual things with my granddaughter, whose simple trust and faith in Jesus is a real inspiration to me.

This was definitely the highlight of my Christmas season. This year, my sister and I plan to remind everyone at our Thanksgiving dinner to begin planning for Jim's Christmas stocking.

Kandi attends Christian Life Center

41 Angel Tree children sponsored by CLC

Sharon Walton

In December 2002, over 650,000 children nationwide received gifts from their incarcerated parent and heard about the best gift of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. Forty-one of those children were sponsored by members of Christian Life Center.

I had the privilege of coordinating Angel Tree for Christian Life Center last December. Part of my responsibilities involved calling the caregivers of the children we had been assigned to find out what the children's needs and wish items were. I was surprised at the "wish" items desired by the children. Mostly they were very modest items: books, games, videos, pierced earrings, or in one instance, a gift certificate for a discount store. The "need" items were generally basic clothing needs: socks, underwear, shirts and pants. It was a joy to work with those who volunteered to sponsor. They were so generous in their giving.

Sharon is CLC's Angel Tree Coordinator

"J and D loved their gifts. It was so nice of you to deliver. Thank you and bless you for being so special."

Caregiver of Angel Tree children

"My class the past two years has really enjoyed blessing a family.'

Mrs. Janet Fogh, Fourth Grade,
Vacaville Christian Schools

How Angel Tree Works

Over the summer, Prison Fellowship field offices provide application forms to prison chaplains. The chaplains pass these out to prisoners who have children. Some restrictions apply: The children must be 16 or under; they must be children or stepchildren of the prisoner; and there must be no court order barring the prisoner from contacting his children.

The chaplains then return the completed applications to the Prison Fellowship field office. Volunteers screen the applications, usually entering those that are qualified into a computer system. The applications are then assigned to participating churches or individuals. Efforts are made to match children with a church in their own neighborhood.

Church coordinators will telephone or write to the child's care giver to determine the child's Christmas wishes. Generally, Angel Tree tries to provide each child with two gifts with a total value of no more than $50. One is a toy or "wish" item, the other is an article of clothing or "need" item.

The church coordinator then assigns children to those in their congregation who have volunteered to participate in Angel Tree. They in turn purchase, wrap and deliver the gifts to the child thus expressing the love of Christ and the families of inmates.

The above information is taken from Prison Fellowship website: www.pfm.org